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99TH CONGRESS
2d Session

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT
99-667

ORIGINAL

YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

JULY 14, 1986.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

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Mr. HAWKINS, from the Committee on Education and Labor, submitted the following

REPORT

together with

SUPPLEMENTAL VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 4650]

[Including cost estimates of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Education and Labor, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 4650) to make grants available for youth suicide prevention programs, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Youth Suicide Prevention Act".

SEC. 2. YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Education shall establish a grant program to assist local educational agencies and private nonprofit organizations to establish and operate programs of youth suicide prevention in accordance with this Act.

(b) APPLICATION.—

(1) An agency or organization which desires to receive a grant from the Secretary under this Act shall submit an application to the Secretary in such form and at such times as the Secretary may require.

(2) In the case of an applicant which is a local educational agency, the application shall provide assurances that Federal funds made available under this Act will be so used as to supplement and, to the extent practicable, increase the amount of State and local funds that would in the absence of such Federal funds be made available for the uses specified in this Act, and in no case supplant such State or local funds.

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(c) USE OF FUNDS.—Any youth suicide prevention program receiving assistance under this Act shall—

(1) assist in increasing awareness of the incidence of youth suicide among families of youths, school personnel, and community leaders;

(2) train school personnel and community leaders in individual and school-wide strategies for youth suicide prevention;

(3) coordinate youth suicide prevention efforts under this Act with alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs funded by the Federal Government, State and local governments, and non-Federal agencies and organizations;

(4) through cooperative efforts, utilize community resources in the development and implementation of youth suicide prevention programs under this Act; and

(5) in a manner determined by the Secretary, cooperate with other appropriate organizations and agencies and with local, State, and Federal government agencies in youth suicide prevention.

(d) GRANT LIMITATION.—Any grant made by the Secretary under this Act may not exceed $100,000 in any fiscal year.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) For fiscal year 1987, of the funds appropriated to carry out the Secretary's Discretionary Funds under section 583 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 $1,000,000 shall be available to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(2) For each of the fiscal years 1988 and 1989, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(3) Section 583 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 is amended by adding the following subsection:

"(c) For fiscal year 1987, from the funds reserved for the purposes of this section, subject to the provisions of subsection (b), the Secretary shall make available $1,000,000 to carry out the Youth Suicide Prevention Act.".

(f) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "local educational agency" has the meaning given in section 1001(f) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; and

(2) the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Education.

SEC. 3. EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS OF PROGRAMS OF YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION.

(a) EVALUATION REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall provide for the evaluation of programs under section 2 of this Act.

(b) CONDUCT OF EVALUATIONS.—The evaluation shall be conducted by individuals not directly involved in the administration of the program or project operation under this Act. These outside evaluations and the program administrators shall jointly develop a set of evaluation criteria which provide for appropriate analysis of the programs.

(c) OBJECTIVE MEASURES.—In order to determine a program's effectiveness in achieving its stated goals, the evaluation shall contain objective measures of such goals and, whenever feasible, will obtain the specific views of program participants about such programs.

(d) DISSEMINATION.—The results of each evaluation conducted under this section shall be submitted to the Secretary for dissemination through the national diffusion network, in the form required for dissemination.

SUMMARY

H.R. 4650 responds to the national tragedy of increasing youth suicide rates by establishing grants for youth suicide prevention programs. Under this bill, the Secretary of Education will make discretionary grants to local educational agencies and private nonprofit organizations. These funds will be used to establish model programs that increase the awareness of the problem among families, school personnel, and community leaders; train school personnel and community leaders in school-wide suicide prevention strategies; and coordinate these prevention efforts with other community and government programs.

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To initiate this program without any additional costs to the Federal government, fiscal year 1987 funds will come from an existing source—$1 million from the Secretary's Discretionary Fund under Chapter 2 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA). For the subsequent fiscal years 1988 and 1989, the program will have a separate, new authorization of such sums as may be necessary.

The projects developed under this demonstration program will be evaluated, and the results will be disseminated nationally.

Legislative Consideration

H.R. 4650 was introduced on April 22, 1986 by Congressman Ackerman and Congressman Lantos. This bill represents the efforts of the two sponsors to combine features of two previously-introduced bills, H.R. 1099, sponsored by Congressman Ackerman, and H.R. 1894, sponsored by Congressman Lantos.

The Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education held two hearings on H.R. 1099 and H.R. 1894, one in Washington, DC on September 10, 1985, and one in Yonkers, New York, on October 21, 1985.

The Subcommittee met on June 17, 1986, and ordered H.R. 4650 reported by unanimous voice vote. On June 25, the Committee on Education and Labor met and ordered the bill reported by unanimous voice vote.

Need for the Legislation

H.R. 4650 offers a Federal response to a national tragedy: the alarming rise in the number of young people who take their own lives. Since 1960, suicide rates among young people ages 15 to 24 have tripled, making suicide the fastest growing cause of death for this age group. Last year, an estimated 6,000 young people were known to have committed suicide. Many thousands more may have taken their lives without their deaths having been reported as suicides.

No one knows how many other young people try to end their lives. The American Association of Suicidology indicates that there may be as many as fifty unsuccessful attempts for every actual death. Ms. Charlotte Ross, director of the Youth Suicide National Center, testified, "In surveys across this country of general high school students, approximately 11 percent of our high school seniors will tell us that they have made at least one suicide attempt at some point in their lives."

In some communities, including many affluent ones, a puzzling phenomenon of youth suicide clusters has emerged. However, testimony before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education emphasized that youth suicide is not limited to one group. Its victims may be rich or poor, white or minority, male or female, living at home, on the streets, or in institutions.

These grim statistics are all the more troubling because we do not fully understand the causes. As Mr. John Caswell, executive director of Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany, NY, told the Subcommittee, "The causes of teen suicide are many and varied. A specific prescription is uncertain. What we do know is

that children are faced with increasingly complex life experiences. Pressures exist today which did not exist 30 years ago. More children are victims of child abuse, more run away from home, more have only one parent, more have unwanted pregnancies, more have a dependence on drugs and alcohol, more are depressed."

Whatever the cause, our Nation pays a price for the loss of these young lives. A premature death by suicide deeply affects the friends and community of the young victim. It may permanently affect the young person's family. It also affects our larger society, because we will never know or benefit from that child's potential. As a parent of a young victim stated at a Congressional briefing, "At a time when the average age of the citizens in this country is increasing, we can ill afford this loss of the potential contributions of these young people to the arts, sciences, service industry, wealth, and defense of our Nation."

Although we cannot be certain of all the causes, we can help prevent this deprivation of human potential. Based on several points raised during hearings, the Committee is convinced that well-designed, carefully-implemented programs of intervention can help save young lives. First, research findings enable us to pinpoint which young people are more likely to attempt suicide and to focus the most intensive prevention efforts on these students. For example, Mr. Stephen Friedman, Deputy Commissioner of the Westchester County, NY, Department of Community Health, discussed in testimony the strong correlations between youth suicide and prior suicide attempts, prior suicides within the family, chronic alcoholism, and drug abuse. Another study carried out at the University of Michigan-Flint found gender and age correlations, as well as relationships between suicide planning and substance abuse, poor grades in school, child abuse, and a poor relationship with parents.

Second, most young people give some sign—a cry for help—before making an attempt. These cries can be picked up and heeded, but only if "counselors, school administrators, social workers, and members of the community . . . have adequate training in knowing what to look and listen for in a potential suicide victim," in the words of George Cohen, Human Relations Specialist for the White Plains, NY, School District.

Third, the Subcommittee heard testimony about several model programs around the country that are already operating successfully and hold potential for replication. These programs include effective strategies for preventing youth suicide that have been developed by school personnel, psychologists, community health professionals, and other expert resource people. In areas such as Lancaster, PA, Fairfax County, VA, and White Plains, NY, professionals have responded to a youth suicide crisis by developing school-based prevention programs that train teachers and other school personnel in recognizing and reaching potentially suicidal students, help other students assist their troubled peers, provide counseling to students in need, and educate parents and the community about the problem.

These techniques are helping to save lives. For example, the Subcommittee heard moving testimony from a high school senior who, after participating in a school prevention program, helped a young friend through a night on which he planned to commit suicide. In

the words of the student, Beth Corney: "I am proud of the fact that I helped save Larry's life and I owe it to peer leaders. The program includes juniors and seniors in high school, and we learn how to help others with problems."

These examples demonstrate that "those who believe that suicide is unstoppable are wrong—tragically wrong," as Alfred DelBello, Chairman of the National Committee on Youth Suicide Prevention stated. Some important steps toward reducing the youth suicide rate are underway, but more needs to be done. Many regions of the country have no programs to address this problem. Others desire a program but lack start-up money. Programs that are established need to be expanded into other schools and other grades.

In short, the problem cries out for a Federal response. Ms. Dorcas Hardy, Assistant Secretary for Human Development Services, Department of Health and Human Services, testified before the Senate Committee on Juvenile Justice to this effect, stating:

> There is a leadership role the Federal government can play and is playing in raising public awareness, information dissemination, research and demonstration of the kinds of services that might help, and generally working in partnerships with State and local governments and private organizations to expand community involvement in addressing the problem.

The Congress and the President affirmed the national significance of the problem when they recently proclaimed the month of June "Youth Suicide Prevention Month." The Committee bill will follow up this symbolic action with an actual authorization. It will give substance to the President's plea that "we must enlist the combined diagnostic and educational efforts of individuals, families, communities, churches, synagogues, private groups, and government agencies."

Federal involvement is needed to demonstrate model approaches, to evaluate intervention methods, and to make the best strategies available nationally. Federal involvement will ensure that the programs are of high quality, well-designed, responsibly implemented, and coordinated with existing programs and services. Such factors are of the utmost importance when dealing with such a sensitive issue as youth suicide. The program authorized by H.R. 4650 will accomplish this.

Cognizant of Federal budget constraints, the Committee feels that youth suicide prevention activities are of sufficient national importance to warrant earmarking a very modest portion of the existing Secretary's discretionary fund for this purpose for fiscal year 1987. In future years, once the program has been initiated, it can receive a separate appropriation.

In summary, the Committee strongly believes that those of us who devote our energies to making sure that children are well-educated, fed, and cared for cannot overlook a problem that robs our youth of their most precious gift. H.R. 4650 represents a first Federal step to recognize and address that problem.

EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

The Youth Suicide Prevention Act establishes a discretionary grant program in the U.S. Department of Education to assist local educational agencies and private nonprofit organizations in establishing and operating youth suicide prevention programs.

Realizing that funds are limited, the Committee is proposing a demonstration program which will support promising efforts to deal with this national problem. To ensure that these funded projects have the broadest impact, the bill requires the Secretary to evaluate programs through outside evaluators, on the basis of criteria developed in consultation with Federal program administrators, and to disseminate the results of these evaluations through the National Diffusion Network. This will enable the most worthy projects to be replicated elsewhere.

Before an agency or organization receives a grant, it must submit an application to the Secretary. Local educational agencies must assure in their applications that funds under this Act will be used to supplement State and local funds and not to supplant them. Grants under this Act may not exceed $100,000 for any fiscal year.

The programs that are supported must include several components. First, they shall assist in increasing awareness of the incidence of youth suicide among families, school personnel and community leaders. Second, they must include a component to train school personnel and community leaders in individual and school-wide strategies for youth suicide prevention. Third, these programs must be coordinated with Federal, State and local alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs. Fourth, the programs must utilize community resources in their development and implementation. Finally, the grantees must cooperate with other appropriate organizations and agencies in a manner prescribed by the Secretary.

The Committee notes that the complex nature of the problem requires a multidisciplinary teamwork approach. The importance of school counselors cannot be underestimated in the prevention of youth suicide. The school counselor has much more responsibility than the verification of graduation requirements. The school counselor understands family dynamics and is in a unique position to coordinate the necessary resources a students may need in times of crisis. Similarly, the school social worker offers expertise in assessing and counseling at-risk students, facilitating peer counseling programs, and making home visits to parents to ensure their involvement. They also offer case management skills in facilitating home-school-community linkages.

Consequently, H.R. 4650 includes as one of its targets special training which can be utilized by school personnel such as school counselors, school social workers, teachers, and administrators.

Acknowledging the existing budget constraints, H.R. 4650 contains a funding mechanism that will channel vitally-needed funds to this national problem without any additional Federal costs in the first year. Specifically, the Committee adopted an amendment which will require start-up funds for this program—an amount of $1 million—to be taken from the Secretary's Discretionary Fund under Chapter 2 of ECIA. This fund—which amounts to 6 percent

of the Chapter 2 Block Grant appropriation—supports national discretionary projects designated by the Congress or by the Secretary. Currently, the ECIA statute earmarks a portion of the discretionary fund to be used for Congressional priorities, including arts in education, drug and alcohol abuse education, law-related education, and the inexpensive book distribution program. Thus, the youth suicide prevention projects would be in keeping with the types of national needs addressed by this fund. The remaining amount that is left after the Congressionally-mandated projects are funded is used by the Secretary of Education for the Secretary's priorities.

Once the youth suicide program has a foothold, the Committee envisions it competing with other priorities for funding in the appropriations process. therefore, the bill authorizes such sums as necessary for fiscal years 1988 and 1989 for the programs under this Act.

OVERSIGHT

No findings or recommendations concerning oversight of the programs amended in this bill have been received by the Committee from the Committee on Government Operations. The provisions of H.R. 4650 are based upon findings from the Committee's ongoing oversight of existing programs.

COST ESTIMATE

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that there will be the following costs to the Federal government in implementing this legislation. The Committee concurs in these estimates and adopts them in compliance with clause VII of Rule 13. No cost estimates have been received from any other Federal department or agency.

The CBO letter follows:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, July 9, 1986.

Hon. AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS,
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the attached cost estimate for H.R. 4650, the Youth Suicide Prevention Act, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor on June 25, 1986.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

RUDOLPH G. PENNER,
Director.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

1. Bill number: H.R. 4650.
2. Bill title: Youth Suicide Prevention Act.
3. Bill status: As ordered reported by the House Committee on Education and Labor on June 25, 1986.

4. Bill purpose: The purpose of this bill is to authorize a program to provide assistance to local educational agencies and private nonprofit organizations for the establishment and operation of youth suicide prevention programs. This bill is subject to subsequent appropriations action.

5. Estimated cost to the Federal Government:

[By fiscal year, in millions of dollars]

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Estimated authorization level		1	1		
Estimated outlays		(1)	1	1	(1)

[1] Less than $500,000

The costs of this bill fall within function 500.

Basis of estimate: This bill authorizes funds for the Department of Education to establish a grant program with educational agencies and nonprofit organizations for the prevention of youth suicide. The funds for 1987 are to be made available from the Secretary's Discretionary Funds under section 583 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981. The funds for 1988 and 1989 are authorized at such sums as may be necessary. Estimates for 1988 and 1989 are based on the stated 1987 funding level, adjusted for inflation.

Outlay estimates were made assuming full appropriation of estimated authorization levels, and assuming continuation of the current spending pattern of similar programs.

6. Estimated cost to State and local government: The Congressional Budget Office has determined that the budgets of state and local governments would not be affected directly by the enactment of this bill.

7. Estimate comparison: None.

8. Previous CBO estimate: None.

9. Estimate prepared by: Ken Pott and Lynne Davidson.

10. Estimate approved by: C.G. Nuckols (for James L. Blum, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis).

Inflationary Impact

Since the first year of funding will involve no additional Federal cost, and since the costs in future years will be very modest, the Committee estimates this bill has no inflationary impact.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Sec. 1. The title of the bill is the "Youth Suicide Prevention Act."

Sec. 2. The Secretary shall make grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) and private nonprofit organizations to assist them in establishing and operating youth suicide prevention programs. Agencies and organizations shall submit applications for grants which, in the case of LEAs, must assure that the Federal funds will supplement and not supplant State and local funds.

Youth suicide prevention programs funded under this Act are required to (1) increase awareness of the incidence of youth suicide

among families of youths, school personnel, and community leaders; (2) train school personnel and community leaders in youth suicide prevention strategies; (3) coordinate these prevention efforts with alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs; (4) utilize community resources in developing these programs; and (5) cooperate with other local, State and Federal agencies and organizations.

Any grant may not exceed $100,000 in any fiscal year. For fiscal year 1987, these programs would be funded by directing $1 million from the Secretary's discretionary fund under Chapter 2, ECIA, toward this purpose. For fiscal years 1988 and 1989, such sums as may be necessary are authorized to be appropriated for this Act.

Sec. 3. The Secretary is required to evaluate programs conducted under this Act, in terms of their effectiveness in achieving their goals and their impact on participants. These evaluations must be conducted by outside evaluators, and the results must be submitted to the National Diffusion Network.

Changes in Existing Law Made by the Bill, As Reported

In compliance with clause 3 of Rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981

Subtitle D—Elementary and Secondary Education Block Grant

Sec. 551. This subtitle may be cited as the "Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981."

(20 U.S.C. 3801 note) Enacted August 13, 1981, P.L. 97-35, sec. 547, 95 Stat. 463.

CHAPTER 1—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MEET SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

* * * * * * *

Subchapter D—Secretary's Discretionary Funds

DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM AUTHORIZED

Sec. 583. (a) * * *

(b) From the funds reserved for the purposes of this section, the Secretary shall first fund—

(1) the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (as carried out through "Reading is Fundamental") as formerly authorized by part C of title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,

(2) the programs of national significance in the "Arts in Education" Program as formerly authorized by part C of title III of such Act,

(3) programs in alcohol and drug abuse education as formerly authorized by the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education Act, and

(4) the law-related education program as formerly authorized by part G of title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,

at least in amounts necessary to sustain the activities described in this sentence at the level of operations during fiscal year 1981 (or $1,000,000 in the case of the program referred to in paragraph (4)), and then utilize the remainder of such funds for the other authorized activities described in subsection (a).

(c) For fiscal year 1987, from the funds reserved for the purposes of this section, subject to the provisions of subsection (b), the Secretary shall make available $1,000,000 to carry out the Youth Suicide Prevention Act.

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SUPPLEMENTAL VIEWS ON H.R. 4650, YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

I share the concerns of many of my colleagues on the Education and Labor Committee about the problem of youth suicide. The testimony that we heard regarding the alarming increase in attempted suicides and the personal experiences of students whose friends committed suicide impressed on all of us the importance of preventive activities. The Youth Suicide Prevention Act is a small but significant first step in providing Federal support for this national problem.

As originally introduced, H.R. 4650 had a $10 million authorization. Subcommittee, Chairman Hawkins offered an amendment which reduced the funding level to $1 million. As a Member of the Budget Committee, it is my feeling that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a new program to receive an appropriation for fiscal year 1987 regardless of the authorization level. Past experience has shown that small programs such as this either go unfunded or receive their funding at the expense of an already existing program.

Suicide prevention cannot wait for better economic conditions. If we are serious about starting up programs in the next fiscal year, then existing funds must be found to meet this urgent need. My amendment, which was adopted at Full Committee, would make available $1 million from the Secretary's Discretionary Fund for the purposes outlined in the Youth Suicide Prevention Act. In fiscal year 1985, there was over $6 million available to the Secretary after funding the four mandated programs and the National Diffusion Network. The amendment is constructed so that funds would be available for suicide prevention projects only after the mandated programs receive their support. Any funds remaining after allocations are made to Inexpensive Book Distribution, Arts in Education, Law-Related Education, Alcohol & Drug Abuse Education, the National Diffusion Network, and the Youth Suicide Prevention Act would continue to be available for discretionary activities by the Secretary.

BILL GOODLING.

71-006 (11)